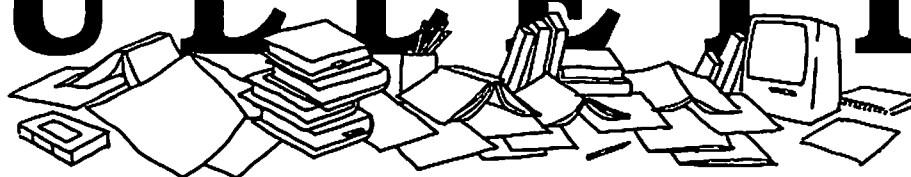


# THE LITERACY MATERIALS BULLETIN



Spring 1990

This first issue of the Literacy Materials Bulletin is the cooperative effort of a seven-member committee formed in 1989 to review and field test literacy materials. We are one of the 1989-90 cost-shared projects funded by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education, Training, and Technology and the Secretary of State.

In November 1989 we sought input from teachers in the field for the first round of reviews. We would like to thank those teachers who took the time to respond. The content of this bulletin is based on many of their recommendations.

We recognize that teaching methodologies and approaches vary widely. Indeed, the members of this committee themselves represent this diversity. We hope to be able to review instructional materials which address a wide spectrum of needs in each bulletin.

The following are some of the criteria we are using to select materials. We are looking for materials which are:

- ☒ currently in print.
- ☒ adult-oriented and interesting to learners.
- ☒ free of bias for age, sex, and race.
- ☒ appropriate to the reading level of learners.
- ☒ designed to encourage meaningful discussion and critical thinking.
- ☒ up-to-date and easy to use.
- ☒ successful with learners.

We are also looking for material with Canadian content and hope to have more examples to share with you in future issues.

You can get more information on the materials reviewed in this issue from any committee member. We all have copies of the books and there is a complete and permanent collection of the materials at the Adult Literacy Contact Centre.

We hope that this bulletin will expand to meet your needs. To do this well, we need input from you. Please help us by getting involved. You can start by sending in a review of your favorite material on the form which is on the last page.

**Joan Acosta**  
Chairperson

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**Title: Matchbook Five Minute Thrillers**

**Author:** Bernard Jackson and Susie Quintanilla

**Publisher:** Fearon Education, 1986

**Available:** Peggy Pepper, 4148 Borden Street, Victoria, B.C. V8X 2G5 (Tel: (604) 727-6228)

**Recommended by:** Bertha Duncan, Coordinator ASE/ESL, Northern Lights College  
**Reviewed by:** Loraine Wong, Coordinator ABE/ESL, Langley School District

**Level:** Basic (0-3) Functional (4-6)

These short books (just 16 pages) are cleverly packaged as matchbooks and come with read-along tapes. All books are easy to read, but have vocabulary and storylines that appeal to adult readers. Each story (from a choice of 20 titles) has adult characters and features a "twist" in plot to keep interest high. The books are excellent for use with reluctant readers as students are attracted by the titles and format and can finish the books

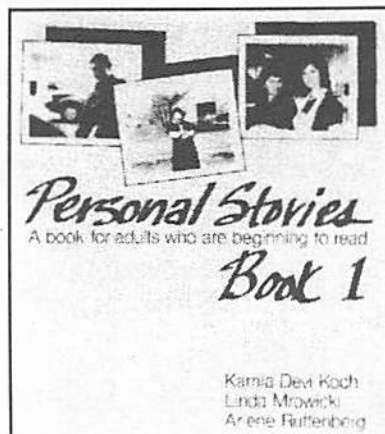
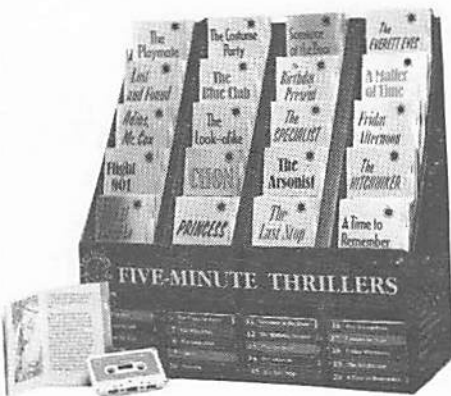
quickly.

The books also include four pages of comprehension questions (also suitable for ESL) that may be used in classroom work. The open-ended finish to the stories may disappoint some students but this feature can easily be used to generate class discussions or writing assignments.

The tapes have received mixed reviews. Some students found the background music overpowering and the narrator's voice unpleasant. Most students, however, were positive about the books and were anxious to read more.

The books can be ordered as a kit for \$249\* which includes 100 books (5 of each title), 20 cassettes, one answer key, display case, and a free tape recorder. The books can also be ordered as a set, 100 books for \$126.

\*Prices are in US funds



**Title: Personal Stories**

**Author:** Mrowicki, Devi Koch, Rattenberg

**Publisher:** Linmore Publishing, 1985

**Available:** Peggy Pepper, 4148 Borden Street, Victoria, B.C. V8X 2G5 (Tel: (604) 727-6228)

**Recommended by:** Sally Gellard, Vancouver Community College, KEC

**Reviewed by:** Andrew Kennedy, Camosun College

**Level:** Basic (0-3)

*Personal Stories* is written for adults who are beginning to read English. Sixteen short stories, with photographs, describe the lives of six central characters in Family, Home, and Weekday Activities. Each story is followed by exercises which check comprehension and conclude with students writing their own stories.

The book can be used as individual reading material, as one-to-one instructional material or as a group reader with oral discussion of the comprehension questions. The sentence writing

exercises are designed to encourage students to write their own personal stories. The book may best be used as supplemental reading material.

The print and photograph layout are appealing. The stories deal with topics relevant to students' lives, are easy to follow and understand, and contain useful vocabulary.

There are some weaknesses, however. The text provides simple sentences which convey little feeling and the language seems stilted. The book provides only slight progression from simple sentences to more complex sentences. Most of the exercises use literal skill questions that may become tedious for the learner. 🐼

#### **Title: Fastback Series**

**Author:** Multi-authored

**Publisher:** Fearon Education, 1985

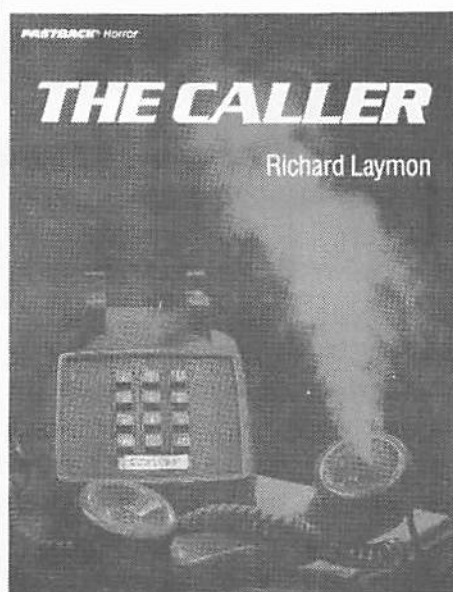
**Available:** Peggy Pepper, 4148 Borden Street, Victoria, B.C. V8X 2G5 (Tel: (604) 727-6228)

**Recommended by:** Bertha Duncan, Coordinator ASE/ESL, Northern Lights College

**Reviewed by:** Barbara Bate, Fraser Valley College

**Level:** Functional (4-6)

The *Fastback Series* is a collection of stories divided into seven popular genres: Crime and Detection, Sports, Mystery, Romance, Spy, Horror, and Science Fiction. Each category



includes 10 to 12 titles.

The stories are presented in small 4" by 5" booklets with dramatic, full-color covers. The back of each book gives a brief, enticing description of the story. The intent of "hooking the reader" is clear.

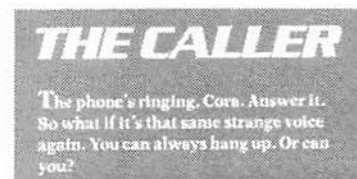
The Fastback books are as easy to read as they are exciting. Interest level is high and vocabulary is controlled. Most stories are under 30 pages in length which make them easy to tape for non-independent readers. The content is suitable for individual leisure reading as well as for small or large group instruction.

Some of the stories in the Romance and Sports titles have main characters who are high school students and as such are involved in teenage activities. These stories

may not appeal to all adults.

The complete set of 74 books costs \$114.00\* while individual categories such as "Spy" may be purchased separately at 3 copies/title (30-36 books) for \$24.00-\$48.00. Comprehension Skillchecks, a pack of booksize cards for each series are available at \$3.00/set. The Skillchecks have not been reviewed. 🐼

\*Prices are in US funds



#### **Title: Good Eating**

**Publisher:** Williams Lake Project Literacy and B.C. Ministry of Health, 1990

**Available:** Provincial Public Health offices

**Recommended by:** Wendy Seale, Vancouver Community College, KEC

**Reviewed by:** Laurie Gould, Vancouver Community College, KEC

**Level:** Basic (0-3)

*Good Eating* is a dandy little booklet with information about good nutrition. The easy-to-read text is accompanied by attractive and sometimes amusing graphics. Readers find out about food groups, "good and junk" foods, and low-cost nutritious foods. Because it delivers much of the information in graphic form, the booklet is appropriate for even



## Eat Every Day

### Milk

One Helping =

1 cup of milk

3/4 cup of yoghurt

4 tablespoons of skim milk powder

1 1/2 ounce of cheese



Kids: 2-3 Helpings

Teens: 3-4 Helpings

Adults: 2 Helpings

Pregnant: 3-4 Helpings



beginning-level readers.

Students who field tested it felt it provided information about an important subject in an interesting way. Two pregnant students at a Functional level found it

useful as a reference book.

*Good Eating* is available free from provincial health units and health departments throughout B.C. A revised edition and leader's guide is currently being prepared. 🐮

*Each bulletin will include a review by someone with expertise in a particular area of literacy. For this issue we have asked Joyce Cameron, a Developmental Studies instructor at Douglas College with experience in tutor training, to review a tutor manual.*

### Title: *Teach Someone to READ: A Step-by-Step Guide for Literacy Tutors*

Author: Nadine Rosenthal

Publisher: Fearon Education, 1987

Available: Peggy Pepper, 4148 Borden Street, Victoria, B.C. V8X 2G5 (Tel: (604) 727-6228)

This tutor training guide is divided into four parts. Part 1 is an introduction to illiteracy;

Part 2 consists of two diagnostic assessments and explanations on how to use them; Part 3 is the "how to" of tutoring with examples, explanations, and exercises; and Part 4 is a short section on tutoring ideas presented in a straightforward manner.

The guide can not be used as a workbook with

literacy students. Rather, a substantial number of pages are devoted to helping tutors learn how to create student-centered material. The author emphasizes that her approach is one that draws on adult learners' experiences and comprehension.

One section that I have found useful in my tutor training sessions explains how to select a topic with a student and then use the topic to create a range of reading, writing, and discussion activities.

*Teach Someone to Read* is not perfect. For instance, the assessment begins with letters and words out of context, which does not match the author's views on the importance of comprehension to the reading process. But the reading passages which follow are adult and chosen with the experience of adult learners in mind. Another example of a fall from

### Teach Someone to READ

A Step-by-Step Guide for Literacy Tutors



Nadine Rosenthal

perfection is the description of the writing process which turns the revision stage into one which centers on the mechanics of writing rather than on the development and change of ideas. However, in this same section the suggestions on writing activities for beginning and intermediate writers will be invaluable to tutors.

*Teach Someone to Read* is definitely worth adding to your resources. If you are just beginning to collect resources for tutors and tutor training, make this book one of the first that you order. 🍀

### Title: *Spotlight Series*

Author: Randall C. Hill

Publisher: Steck-Vaughn, 1989

Available: Educational Resources, #109 8475 Ontario Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5X 3E8 (Telephone: (604) 324-9717)

Recommended by: Laurie Gould, Vancouver Community College, KEC

Reviewed by: Joan Acosta, Capilano College

Level: Basic (0-3) Functional (4-6)

*Spotlight* is a high-interest, low reading level series about rock, movie, music, TV, and sports stars. There are presently six books in the series.

Each book has eight four-page stories about well-known personalities



followed by two pages of exercises which focus on developing recall, vocabulary, and sequencing skills. The answers to the exercises are in the back of the book for easy reference. Vocabulary words, set in bold-face, are part of the text and can be found in a glossary at the end of each book.

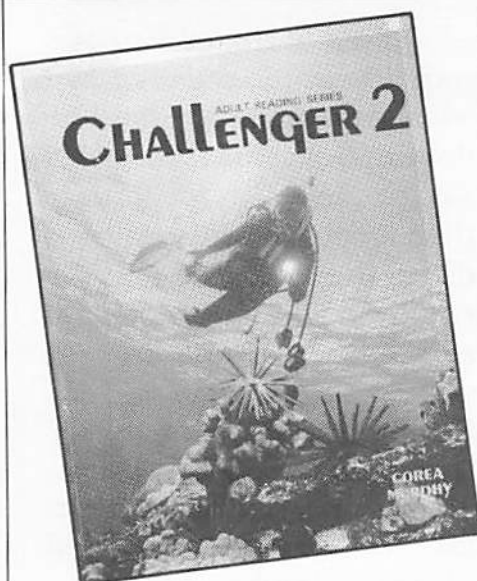
The books definitely have a glossy magazine appeal. The full-color photos on the covers are eye-catching and the inside format is friendly to beginning-level readers. There is a good balance of graphics to text as well as large, readable type and lots of white space.

Students who field-tested the series in five different literacy programs gave positive feedback. They liked the photos and found the information interesting.

Most of the exercises require simple recall of facts with little attention paid to developing critical thinking skills. However, we found that most students enjoyed doing the exercises and could do so independently as the instructions are simple and straightforward.

One of the biggest drawbacks, aside from the exercises, is the short shelf life of the books. They could probably be used for about two years. After that time, many of the "stars" may have faded. The company has already published the second in the series for the sports stars, so I would imagine that it will be updating the other categories as well. The other obvious weakness which is important to mention is the scarcity of Canadian content. 🍀





**Title: Challenger Adult Reading Series**

**Author:** Corea Murphy

**Publisher:** New Readers Press

**Available:** Educational Resources, #109 - 8475 Ontario Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5X 3E8 (Tel: (604) 324-9717)

**Recommended by:** Nada Traison, Fraser Valley College, Corrections

**Reviewed by:** Andrew Kennedy, Camosun College  
**Level:** 0-9

The *Challenger Series* is an eight-book structured reading, writing, and reasoning skills program which takes students from the beginning stages of reading to a Grade 9 level. Each book contains twenty lessons. The lessons include a reading selection (generally each passage is longer than the previous one) and a variety of related

exercises. Also included are vocabulary and spelling exercises, writing practice, word study according to a phonics principle (Books 1, 3, and 5) and other exercises. Books 1 and 3 present stories about adult characters. Books 2 and 4 offer topics similar to an encyclopedia. Books 5, 6, 7, and 8 present adaptations of well-known works of fiction and non-fiction. Separate instructor's manuals and answer keys have practical suggestions for use of the series.

The series has been used in many instructional settings with either groups or individuals. It is effective in a classroom where students are functioning at different levels, or with students whose learning style responds to a workbook approach. In general, students have responded positively to the look and content of the series. Nada Traison, who sent in the original review, noted that it has been very successful with learners in a corrections literacy program.

The books are written for adult use and have a clean layout of both print and graphics. The reading selections deal with topics that hold the students' interest. The format of the lessons is consistent and directions are clear and easy to follow.

As a reading program this series has much to offer. However, it should be noted that many of the reading selections are very American in content. Some of the exercises, particularly in the higher level books, are too long and often of questionable value. The series offers a controlled workbook approach to the reading process that may not be suitable for some learners.

Books 1 to 4 are \$8.50 each. Book 5 is \$9.75. Books 6, 7, and 8 are \$13.25 each. Teacher's Guides and Answer Keys are from \$4.95 to \$9.25.

**Lesson 11**

**Sleeping**



**Words for Study**

sleepy	move	fin	lawn
yawn	brings	winter	chessboard
asleep	fourth	crack	pawns
become	log	dawn	lawful
breathing	choice	mow	awful

**Sleeping**

On most nights, as you start to get sleepy, you may yawn a few times. Yawning is a very common way in which your body tries to draw in more air.

After you go to bed, changes start to happen in your body even before you fall asleep. Your body heat goes down, and your brain waves become more even. When you do fall asleep, your heart rate slows down, your body relaxes, and your breathing becomes very even.

Doctors say that we move through four stages of sleep each night. Each stage brings us into deeper sleep. On most nights, we go through these stages four or five times.

Most dreaming takes place during the fourth stage, which is called REM. REM sleep lasts from five to twenty minutes at a time. During REM sleep, the body is so limp that if anybody tried to wake you up, you would not be able to move for quite a few minutes.

**Word Opposites.** Match each word at the left with the word that means the opposite. Note how the first one has been done.

always	clear	1. cloudy
anger	_____	2. cute
brand-new	_____	3. joy
change	_____	4. men and women
children	_____	5. never
clear	_____	6. shrank
grew	_____	7. sky
saved	_____	8. spent
sea	_____	9. stay the same
ugly	_____	10. used



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**Title: Basic Skills with Math**

**Author:** Jerry Howett

**Publisher:** Cambridge Book Company, 1980

**Available:** Robert Kirk, 1225 Cardero St., Apt. 510, Vancouver, B.C. V6G 2H8 (Telephone: (604) 684-4881)

**Reviewed by:** Laurie Gould, Vancouver Community College, KEC

The Cambridge *Basic Skills with Math* series published in 1980 is still cited as one of the best series available for use with Fundamental level students. It consists of four workbooks: *Basic Skills with Whole Numbers*, *Basic Skills with Fractions*, *Basic Skills with Decimals and Percent*, and *Basic Skills: A General Review*. The last of these is useful for those students who simply require a basic review and not the comprehensive practice available in the other three. Some instructors feel this book is the best in the series.

Teachers recommend this series for a number of reasons. The layout is attractive and appropriate for adult learners and the approach works well in either individualized or group study programs.

Each book contains a pre-test to assess areas of weakness and strength. A Skill Chart then indicates the page on which to begin work. Step-by-step instructions are followed by numerous practice exercises on each sub-skill.

The word problems are based on real life adult situations and a final review test is included in each book. Students are often able to work independently because the instructions are straight-forward and the readability of the word problems is low. Answers to all exercises are in the back of the book.

There are some weaknesses in this series, however. Teachers say they would like to see more work on reading, writing, and

rounding whole numbers and decimals, as well as some work on estimating. They complain that the word problems too often offer practice on just one operation and do not build on previously learned skills. Also because the series is American, very little metric work is included. Teachers also identify the explanations in the percent sections as confusing and overly complicated. Finally, students need to be cautioned that a few of the answers in the back of the books are incorrect.

Despite these drawbacks, many instructors and students say this is the clearest and most comprehensive math series they've encountered.

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## NEWS FLASH

*NewsReader* is a new weekly feature in *The Province* newspaper created especially for literacy students. News stories are selected and adapted weekly by Joan Acosta and Laurie Gould. The open format of the page is designed to encourage beginning readers to tackle a daily newspaper. 📖

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## RECOMMENDED LITERACY MATERIALS REVIEW

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_ Copyright Date \_\_\_\_\_

Where is it available? \_\_\_\_\_

Level (please circle)

\*Basic (Grade 0-3)

\*\*Functional (Grade 4-6)

\*\*\*Independent (Grade 7-9)

Please be as specific as possible in describing the material. If reviewing print material, please attach a photocopy of the table of contents and a sample page of the text to assist us in evaluating the material.

1. Describe the material \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How do you use it? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Why does it work with learners? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What are the weaknesses, if any? \_\_\_\_\_

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Please feel free to elaborate on any aspect of this material. Use the other side of this form for additional comments. Submissions should be sent to:

**Joan Acosta**  
**Capilano College**  
**2055 Purcell Way**  
**North Vancouver, B.C.**  
**V7J 3H5**

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_

(name)

(institution)